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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 5

230 SOUTH DEARBORN ST.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60604

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REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

JUL 25 1990

5HS-12

Mr. John L. Hesse, Principal Investigator
Michigan Department of Health
3223 North Logan/Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
Post Office Box 30195
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Mr. Hesse:

This is in response to your letter of June 15, 1990 regarding the drums in Torch Lake. As you know, the Emergency and Enforcement Response Branch has already filmed a number of the drums in Torch Lake and has sampled the contents. The samples were analyzed for the broad scan of organic and inorganic substances as you suggested but the results are very disappointing. Due to the complex nature of the samples and a great many interferences, a large number of compounds have been tentatively identified but nothing has been confirmed. In addition, magnetic surveys of the lake bottom indicate that there may be several hundred drums spread over a wide area.

All of the drums filmed appear to have been breached, and therefore, flooded. It has been our experience on this and other projects, that sampling such drums seldom produces useful information.

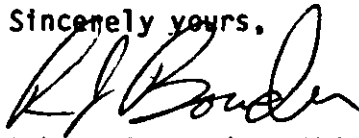
It is our present intention to sample one or more of the drums that are on the shoreline and analyze the samples for several of the specific compounds that have been tentatively identified. We believe that the contents of the drums in the lake are similar to the contents of the drums on the shoreline. Analysis for a specific compound has a greater chance of success than a general scan when a complex organic mixture is encountered.

Mr. Jae Lee, the Remedial Project Manager for the site, is conducting a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study on the site. We believe it is appropriate to characterize the underwater drums as part of that study since the Remedial Program has the capacity to deal with the entire problem effectively.

If the drums on the shoreline are found to contain hazardous materials, the Emergency Response program will remove and dispose of them since they would constitute a direct contact threat to the public in the area.

We will provide Mr. Lee with any data we have regarding Torch Lake and will act as a technical advisor at his request.

Sincerely yours,



Robert J. Bowden, Chief
Emergency and Enforcement Response Branch

cc: Jae Lee
W. Nied
J. Barnette
J. Dikinis